



Wisconsin

DEVELOPMENTS

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USDA Announces Funding for Construction of State-of-the-Art Hospital in Southwestern Wisconsin

On March 1, 2013, Agriculture Under Secretary for Rural Development Dallas Tonsager was in southwestern Wis. to announce that Rural Development has approved Prairie du Chien Memorial Hospital for a \$32.4 million Community Facilities Direct Loan. The funding will be used for the construction of a new acute care medical facility, improving the region's access to critical medical care and related support services.

"This investment illustrates the Administration's continued commitment to helping rural communities compete in today's global economy," said Tonsager. "A project of this magnitude will improve the

quality of life for area residents, not only with improved access to medical care, but by strengthening the local economy. From construction to attracting new businesses to creating jobs, this facility will have a lasting and positive impact on the region. In fact, this is the largest Rural Development Community Facilities loan that has ever been awarded in the State of Wisconsin by USDA."

The hospital's existing facility, constructed in 1957, is outdated and is unable to accommodate growth and future expansion. Landlocked,



Under Secretary Tonsager signs a Certificate of Achievement to commemorate the funding award.

the hospital rents parking from the school district and uses a nearby church parking lot for a helipad.

The new 105-acre location, on the southern edge of the city limits near the Prairie du Chien Municipal Airport, will improve access to the facility for rescue vehicles, visitors, and patients while allowing for expanded services and flexibility for future growth.

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Agriculture Secretary Vilsack Announces Expansion of Refinancing Program to Help More Rural Homeowners Wisconsin Joins Pilot Program

In January, Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack announced that USDA is adding 15 more states and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico to a pilot program that enables current USDA home loan borrowers to save money on housing costs by refinancing their mortgages with lower interest rates.

"USDA's expansion of this program will help more rural borrowers refinance their mortgages to reduce their monthly payments and ease their financial burdens," Vilsack said. "As our economy continues to recover, this program will enable rural families living in USDA-financed

homes to take advantage of historically low interest rates."

The pilot program is being expanded to include: Alaska, Arkansas, Colorado, Idaho, Kansas, Missouri, Montana, North Dakota, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Texas, Utah, Washington, West Virginia, Wisconsin, and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico. These states are being added because they have been identified as having a very high proportion of persistent poor counties, that is, those with a poverty rate of at least 20 percent in each of the last four U.S. Censuses.

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

Prairie du Chien Memorial Hospital *(continued from page 1)*

"We are both excited and grateful to receive the support for our project from the US Department of Agriculture. This investment demonstrates a strong commitment to improving the health of the communities we serve," said Bill Sexton, Chief Executive Officer, Prairie du Chien Memorial Hospital.

The state-of-the-art health care facility will feature private (single patient) rooms, superior infection control, increased accessibility, and much more.



During a tour, the Under Secretary received a tutorial on the MRI machine at Prairie du Chien Hospital.

control, increased accessibility, and much more.

The new 25-bed acute care hospital will also provide an enhanced emergency and urgent care department, an exceptional birthing center, an added women's center, and an expanded Surgery Department.

All current services will continue, including obstetrics, intensive care, medical imaging, respiratory therapy, rehabilitation, hospice, and home care.

In addition, the new Prairie du Chien Memorial Hospital Campus will have separate visitor and staff parking areas, as well as efficient access to the ambulance bay and a ground level helipad. The landscaping will provide patients, visitors, and staff an outdoor dining area and wellness trails.

The new facility serves four counties including two in southwest Wisconsin and two in northeast Iowa. Construction of the \$50 million state-of-the-art facility is expected to begin in April 2013.

The remaining funding needed for the project will be provided by the recipient, including local bank placement bonds and cash reserves. Crawford County will assist with the project, by allowing the hospital to utilize the county's bonding capacity, without assuming any liability for the debt.

USDA Announces Investment to Support Local Economic Development and Job Creation

City of Plymouth receives funding to provide assistance for the expansion of area business

USDA Rural Development State Director, Stan Gruszynski, announced that the City of Plymouth in eastern Wisconsin was selected to receive USDA funding that will support local businesses and expand job growth in the area.

"I commend the city of Plymouth, they put forward a strong application. These funds will strengthen their local economy," Gruszynski remarked.

The City of Plymouth will use a \$500,000 loan provided through the Rural Economic Development Loan and Grant (REDLG) program as pass through funding to Glacier Transit and Storage (GTS).

GTS will use the financing to expand their refrigerated warehouse operations located in Plymouth,

Wis. The expansion will create three new jobs and provide storage for cheese manufacturers in the state, as well as other businesses with food storage needs.

"We are thrilled to see GTS expand their operations in Plymouth. The expansion project means so much for our area food industry cluster and the project helps to add stability to our local businesses," said Plymouth Mayor, Donald Pohlman. "We are fortunate in Plymouth that local business, local government, and USDA Rural Development have a positive working relationship where we can come together to make things happen."

The mission of GTS, a family owned and operated 3PL company, is to provide excellent customer care with pride, quality, and experience

while exceeding warehousing and transportation needs. GTS offers a wide range of logistical and warehousing services including inventory financing, cross docking, customized picking, packaging, and loading/unloading rail cars and containers and transportation.

The Rural Economic Development Loan and Grant program is designed to support job creation efforts, promote business development, and strengthen economic growth in rural communities. Eligible recipients are rural utilities program borrowers that pass the funds to local organizations. The money must be used for projects to retain and create jobs, upgrade public infrastructure, improve service delivery, or improve the quality of life for area residents and visitors.

USDA Rural Development Notices of Funding Availability

Rural Energy for America Program (REAP):

REAP provides funds for the purchase of renewable energy systems, to make energy efficiency improvements, and to conduct feasibility studies for renewable energy systems for agriculture producers and rural small businesses in eligible areas. Funding will be available in the form of grants and loan guarantees. Eligible projects include installing renewable energy systems such as wind turbines, solar, geothermal, biomass, anaerobic digesters, hydroelectric, and ocean or hydrogen systems. In addition, applicants may apply for combination loan guarantee and grant funding.

Complete applications must be received by:

- **April 30, 2013 for Renewable energy system and energy efficiency improvement grant applications and combination grant and guaranteed loan applications.**

- **April 30, 2013 for Renewable energy system feasibility study grant applications.**
- **July 15, 2013 for Renewable energy system and energy efficiency improvement guaranteed loan only.**

For further details about eligibility rules and application procedures, visit: <https://www.federalregister.gov/articles/2013/03/29/2013-07275/notice-of-funding-availability-for-the-rural-energy-for-america-program>.

Notices of Funding Availability

past, current, and future notices can be viewed at:

www.rurdev.usda.gov/rd/nofas/

The following notices are anticipated within the next 60 days:

Intermediary Relending Program (IRP):

The purpose of the IRP program is to increase economic activity and employment in rural communities. Under the IRP program, loans are provided to intermediaries for the establishment of revolving loan funds.

Value-Added Producer Grants (VAPG) Program:

The VAPG Program enables eligible agricultural producers to develop businesses that produce and market value-added agricultural products, helping them to enter into value-added activities.

Wisconsin Joins Pilot Program *(continued from page 1)*

The refinancing pilot program expands upon USDA's ongoing effort to assist rural homeowners holding loans made or guaranteed by USDA Rural Development. In 2010, USDA established an aggressive modification policy for Guaranteed Loans that helps homeowners who are delinquent on their mortgages. These homeowners can lower their monthly payments through a loan modification that re-amortizes their payments over a term of up to 40 years, lowers their interest rate, or both. USDA also has a "Mortgage Recovery Advance" program in which the Department provides guaranteed lenders up to 12 months of mortgage payments on behalf of borrowers who have fallen behind on their payments due to job loss or other hardships.

Participants in the pilot refinancing program are required to meet income eligibility requirements, and must have made their mortgage payments on time for 12 consecutive months. Borrowers participating in USDA's Single Family Housing Direct and Guaranteed loan programs are eligible to participate. Borrowers do not have to obtain new credit reports, property inspections or home appraisals. Refinanced loans must be at least one percent below the original interest

rate. Terms cannot exceed 30 years. No cash out is permitted to the borrower.

USDA unveiled the initiative almost one year ago. It initially included borrowers in 19 states hardest hit by the downturn in the housing market. To date, 3,394 rural borrowers have benefited from the USDA refinancing pilot program. These loans total nearly \$453 million.

The original states in the two-year pilot program are: Alabama, Arizona, California, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Michigan, Mississippi, Nevada, New Jersey, New Mexico, North Carolina, Ohio, Oregon, Rhode Island, South Carolina and Tennessee. The performance of the pilot will be reviewed after two years to evaluate whether to continue, terminate or make the refinance program permanent.

Rural Development's housing loans and grants make a significant difference in the lives of thousands of rural Americans across the nation. These investments boost rural economies and create jobs.

EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT

Rural Development Employee Dedicated to Service and Community

Kirk Liljestrom, an Area Technician located in Spooner, Wisconsin, is dedicated to serving others in his community.

He recently attended the “Mad City Money” event held at the Spooner High School, and helped seniors with financial planning decisions.



Kirk Liljestrom coaches a high school senior with financial decisions at the “Mad City Money” event

The annual event is a financial simulation that focuses on preparing upcoming high school graduates for real world scenarios with personal financial management. The students are given a baseline salary, job description, and family scenario; and must determine choices to succeed and stay within their budget. During the simulation, the students cycle through stations to calculate budgets, costs and payments with items such as housing, transportation, food, clothing, and recreation.

Several local businesses and community members support and are involved in this event.

In addition, Liljestrom volunteered at the local Spooner food pantry during the Martin Luther King Jr., National Day of Service on January 15, 2013.



Kirk Liljestrom, pictured with Washburn County Food Pantry Director, Sue Adams

The food pantry provided food to more than 725 different families in 2012. According to Adams, the food pantry assists approximately 350 families per month, and 50 percent of the families use the food pantry five times or more per year. She attributes this to economic conditions that are increasing the need for families to rely on the food pantry services.

RECOGNITIONS

USDA Bids Farewell - - -



USDA Rural Development is saying farewell to **Sue Larson**, Area Director for the Menomonie and Spooner Area Offices. With more than 30 years of Federal Service, she has touched many along the way. Sue has made a huge difference in the lives of the many customers, partners, and co-workers she has worked with through the years. She is passionate about the mission of the agency and really enjoyed being apart of the many projects and assisting numerous communities during her career. Sue's passion and zest for life, and pure enjoyment of people, is truly inspiring.

We thank her for all of her years of exceptional service and we will certainly miss her as a part of the USDA Rural Development Team!

Good Luck as you begin a new path Sue. We wish you the very best!

Years of Service Honored:

Maryann Bravo

Acting Area Director,
Menomonie Area Office

30 Years of Federal Service

Jane White

Area Specialist,
Dodgeville Area Office

25 Years of Federal Service

Landis Wagner

Area Specialist,
Menomonie Area Office

5 Years of Federal Service

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS



November 28, 2012 - Valued Partner Award for Engineering Excellence.

USDA Rural Development Wisconsin State Director, Stan Gruszynski, named Stanley Charron as the recipient of the 2012 Valued Partner Award for Engineering Excellence. Charron is a Professional Engineer (P.E.) for MSA Professional Services, Inc. located in Marshfield, Wis. Brian Deaner, USDA Rural Development Community Programs Director, presented the award to Charron, on behalf of Gruszynski, at the MSA Marshfield Office.

December 14, 2012 - Wind Turbine Installation on Gabler Farms, near Augusta, Wis.

The 10-kilowatt Bergey wind turbine will produce approximately 12,500 kilowatt hours annually, replacing 100% of the farm's energy needs. Eau Claire Energy Cooperative will buy any excess energy produced. USDA Rural Development awarded a \$20,000 Rural Energy for America Program grant for the project. Mike's Windpower Systems installed the wind turbine.



March 14, 2013 - Wisconsin USDA Rural Development Revolving Loan Fund Roundtable

USDA Rural Development staff hosted a roundtable discussion on revolving loan fund (RLF) availability with intermediaries and partners from across the state at the Rural Development State Office in Stevens Point, Wis. The roundtable, facilitated by Jeff Hudson, Business & Cooperative Programs Director, provided enthusiastic and productive exchange of information; and focused on addressing the unique issues related to RLFs. Attendees shared ideas, concerns, successes, additional available resources, and more.

March 18, 2013 - Habitat for Humanity of the Sauk - Columbia Area Grant Signing

The \$268,200 Self-Help Housing Grant awarded by USDA Rural Development will enable HFHSCA to build 10 homes over the next two years. The partnership not only involves HFHSCA and USDA Rural Development, but also brings in other resources such as participant labor, community volunteer services, and local businesses and churches providing support and resources to insure success.



March 20, 2013 - USDA Honors Ken Blomberg

USDA Rural Development Wisconsin State Director, Stan Gruszynski, presented Wisconsin Rural Water Association Executive Director Ken Blomberg with the 2013 USDA Rural Development State Director Award at the 25th Annual Rural Water Technical Conference held in Green Bay, Wis. Blomberg was singled out because of the important contributions he has made in assisting rural communities to improve necessary services, and his commitment to ensure safe and clean drinking water across Wisconsin.



** USDA remains focused on carrying out its mission, despite a time of significant budget uncertainty. These announcements are one part of the Department's efforts to strengthen the rural economy. USDA has made a concerted effort to deliver results for the American people, even as USDA implements sequestration – the across-the-board budget reductions mandated under terms of the Budget Control Act. USDA has already undertaken historic efforts since 2009 to save more than \$700 million in taxpayer funds through targeted, common-sense budget reductions. These reductions have put USDA in a better position to carry out its mission, while implementing sequester budget reductions in a fair manner that causes as little disruption as possible.

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DEADLINE EXTENDED: Hispanic and Women Farmers and Ranchers Claims Due by MAY 1st

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack announced the extension of the voluntary claims process for Hispanic and women farmers and ranchers who allege discrimination by the USDA in past decades. All claims must now be filed by MAY 1, 2013.

"Hispanic and women farmers who believe they have faced discriminatory practices in the past from the USDA have additional time to file a claim in order to have a chance to receive a cash payment or loan forgiveness," said Vilsack.

As announced in February 2011, the voluntary claims process will make available at least \$1.33 billion for cash awards and tax relief payments, plus up to \$160 million in farm debt relief, to eligible Hispanic and women farmers and ranchers. There are no filing fees to participate in the program.

Claimants may register for a claims package by calling the Call Center at 1-888-508-4429 or visiting the website at www.farmerclaims.gov. Completed Claims and other documentation must be

received no later than 11:59 p.m. PDT on May 1, 2013. Information on how to submit a Claim is included in the free Claim package or online at www.farmerclaims.gov.

Under Secretary Vilsack's leadership, USDA has instituted a comprehensive plan to strengthen the Department as a model service provider and to ensure that every farmer and rancher is treated equally and fairly as part of "a new era of civil rights" at USDA.

Prairie du Sac Named Best-Tasting Water in Rural America

The city of Prairie du Sac, Wis., has been awarded the gold medal for best-tasting rural water in the nation during the 2013 Great American Water Taste Test, held at the National Rural Water Association's (NRWA) Water Rally in Washington, D.C. USDA Rural Utilities Service Acting Administrator John Padalino served on the judging panel. Padalino administers USDA water and environmental programs.

"This event is a reminder of how essential rural water infrastructure is to every

community in America," Padalino said. "A strong rural water network leads to a strong rural America. A strong rural America leads to a stronger America, where food, energy,

goods and services are plentiful. Congratulations to the hard-working water utility operators and the community of Prairie du Sac in Wisconsin."

A panel of judges selected the finalists from entries across the United States. Each sample was judged on clarity, bouquet and taste.

Since 2009, USDA has invested \$8 billion in new and improved infrastructure that will benefit 4.5 million households and businesses and 12.4 million rural residents.



Prairie du Sac representative presented with the Gold Award for Best Tasting Water at the Annual Wisconsin Rural Water Association Conference.

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